Explicit Instruction, Comic Strips and ESP Reading Comprehension

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Abstract: Vocabulary plays the important role in language learning. However, the vocabulary used in language, whether implicitly or explicitly, becomes the central discussion in language literature. In this study, comic strips were used to investigate the development of the learner to enhance their reading comprehension explicitly. Quasi experimental with posttest design involved 54 engineering students of Polytechnics was employed in this study. Students were organized into two groups with two different treatments, the first group was presented with comic strips and the second group was presented text only. Independent sample T-test used in analyzing the data revealed that the group receiving comic strips as their treatment to enhance their reading comprehension outperformed the group receiving text only as their treatment in comprehending reading. In addition, to offering pedagogical suggestion that the practitioners can take into account in teaching reading, especially in ESP context, to improve students' comprehension in reading.

1   INTRODUCTION

In the university level, the teaching of English for Non-English Department students is different from that in the English Department. In Non-English Departments, English is positioned as English for Specific Purposes (ESP). It refers to the teaching and learning of English as a second or foreign language where the goal of the learner is to use English in a particular domain.

Mostly, in the ESP content area, reading is the first to be concerned. Because reading is the gate to deliver the printed information to the readers, which has the biggest portion in the skills to learn. Reading is an active process, which involves some elements of processing (Smith, 1994: 23) she described the nature of the reading process as follows:

(1) written text is a blue print to which readers add the details, (2) comprehending requires readers to construct meaning. This is accomplished by using the direct and indirect meanings of an author's words. Plus what the readers known that is relevant, (3) comprehending is an interacting process in which the reader's knowledge of the world interacts with the message conveyed directly and indirectly by the text. The result is fully developed communication between author and reader.

The characteristics of ESP as Dudley and Evans (1998) said that (1) ESP is defined to meet specific needs of the learners, (2) ESP makes use of underlying methodology and activities of the discipline it serves, (3) ESP is centered on the language appropriate to these activities in terms of grammar, lexis, register, study skills, discourse and genre. Mostly in content area of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), reading is taking the most view to see and pay attention. Reading is such a long and complex process and high in the L2 content. It demands the reader to have dual activations, understand the subject matters and the language at the same time. Beside empirical problems faced by the students described previously, the ESP lecturers as well as ESP teachers also experience difficulties in delivering their instructional material to the students. Hutchinson & Waters (1987: 158), three problems are identified which matches the results of discussions with teachers of ESP. These are lack of ESP orthodoxy to provide a ready-made guide, the new realm of knowledge the ESP teachers have to cope with, and the change in the status of English language teaching. It is believed that these challenges inevitably lead to practical problems encountered by the students in their learning English. With these issues as practical and empirical evidence, if optimum learning is sought in the practices of teaching ESP needs to shift its focus from English in isolation to

127

English as medium for subject matter exchanges (Aniroh, 2009: 169). With this teaching orientation, both students and ESP lecturers will obviously have a clear picture of what to learn and how to learn ESP at college level.

At the conceptual level, Hutchinson & Waters (1987: 16) note that ESP is divided into two main types and differentiated according whether the learner requires English for Academic Study (EAP: English for Academic Purposes) or for work (EOP/EVP/VES : English for Occupational Purposes/ English for Vocational Purposes/ Vocational English as a Second Language). As Sulistyo (2012: 13) assert, in the Indonesian context essentially the teaching of English to college students of non-English departments, in which English as a course is only offered in one semester with 2 credits semester, needs to be classified into EAP since it aims to equip the students with academic reading study skills. It is different from the purpose of the teaching of EOP of which orientation is to equip the students with English competences related to their specific field of study for future occupational purposes. One of essential point to be noted that ESP subject is certainly need to have clear correlation to the students' needs and it showed significantly effectiveness in making learning English better and faster. Then, in the term of teaching of reading to non-English Department students who took EAP course, it is obvious that the students are expected to be able to convey implicit and explicit details from various text they read. Baker (1985) as cited by Fahim (2012: 141) who found that college students with lower verbal abilities were able to identify individual words and facts but were unable to combine the information in the text with the previously acquired information. This inability to integrate ideas was accompanied by an inability to draw logical inferences and to check ideas while reading to see if the ideas contradict each other. Since reading comprehension plays a center role in academic instruction and it is what the students need to succeed both in an academic environment, it is necessary to provide explicit training in the specific reading strategy skills in which students are expected to perform adequate proficiency in reading.

At the Engineering Polytechnic (PENS) an ESP course of English is offered in first semester until sixth. Some English lecturers was conducted to gain information on the teaching EAP in the department. They mentioned that when teaching, they delivered a text to the students and asked them to read sentence per sentence and to translate word by word. Also, the students were asked to report when they found difficulties in the grammar construction of the sentences and the meaning of words in comprehending the reading passages. They also added that most of the time, they taught English in the students' native language, Bahasa Indonesia. Taber (2006) states that translation of literary passages from the target language into the native language constitutes one feature of the Grammar-Translation Method. The classical procedure for intensive reading utilized in the department is certainly close to the practice of the Grammar-Translation Approach in which the teacher works with the learner, using the first language to explain the meaning of a text, sentence by sentence. The use of translation is believed that learners will understand, and when the learners do some of the translation themselves, it allows the teacher to check whether they understand (Nation, 2009: 25). Sulistyo (2001: 24) added that ability to translate word by word of a passage is no warranty of abilities to comprehend the passage content as a whole.

Reading comprehension can be improved by employing certain strategies in the form of study skills. One of the widely used study strategies to gain students' comprehension, mostly in reading comprehension is PQRST, which stand for Preview, Question, Read, Summarized, and Test (Ahuja & Ahuja, 2007: 21). PQRST is kind of reading strategy that has been used to be effective to improve a readers' understanding, and the ability to recall and gain information. It means that the reader is more likely to learn, and to learn more of the reading material. Steps in PQRST are also beneficial for aiding the students in comprehending the text. This strategy is also suitable for teaching expository reading which EAP students learn (Wormeli, 2005: 131). The PQRST strategy has been empirically shown to be able to improve the student's reading comprehension. Haeriyanto (2012) taken classroom action research (CAR) and found that PQRST strategy helped to improve the reading comprehension skills of the eleventh graders.

Related to reading strategies which are used in this study, teachers often give students reading materials accompanied by visual such as pictures, cartoon, or comic strips to make reading more enjoyable and comprehensible. Likewise, ESL and EFL textbook designers and materials developers often use visual to provide context which is helps engage students in reading. A comic strip is defined in this study as a series of pictures inside boxes that tell a story. Among visual genres, comic strips catch many researchers' attention because they are communicative, popular, accessible, and readable, and they are combine aesthetic perception with intellectual pursuit

(O'Sullivan, 1971; Swain, 1978; Inge, 1990; Waller, 1991; Harvey, 1994). Comic strips communicate using two major media words and images, this is kind of arbitrary separation because comic strips' expressive potential lies in skillfully employing words and images together. Harrison (1998) discussed how comic strips can be employed in journalism history classes to illuminate the subject and impart a number of relevant lesson. Wright and Sherman (1994) discussed the attributes of daily comic strips that make them an ideal media for reading. After analyzing the readability of various comic strips readily available to students and teachers, they argued that comic strips can be used effectively to build reading skills. Moreover, Sherman and Wright (1994) introduced a teaching strategy using newspaper comic strips to promote higher level thinking elementary and secondary students. In their study, they explained two functions of questioning (centering and expansion) using a Peanut comic strip. Recent article. Wright and Sherman (1999) replied that teachers can promote literacy, higher thinking level, and writing skills by encouraging students to combine words and pictures to create comic strips. Moreover, they said that if teachers want to students to become literate, critical, and creative thinker, in advance they must align curricula, teaching strategies, and instructional resources. In the area of reading, the task is to stimulate students thinking about explicit and implicit meaning conveyed by textual material. In their conclusion, they suggested that teachers could accomplish the task by using comic strips as both method and medium of instruction.

Ousselin (1997) in his study suggested that comic strips are available to complement textbooks and activities commonly used, because they are versatile, easy to use, and culturally relevant. Many reading comprehension studies consider the extent to which visuals, help readers to comprehend the information represented within the texts. Certain functions of visuals in reading were identified as:

1. **Representation**: Visual repeat the text's content or substantially overlap with the text.
2. **Organization:** Visuals enhance the text's coherence.
3. **Interpretation**: Visuals provide the reader with more concrete information.
4. **Transformation**: Visuals target critical information in the text and recode it in a more memorable form.
5. **Decoration**: Visuals are used for their aesthetic properties or to spark reader's interest in the text. (Liu, 2004: 226).

One of the theoretical frameworks to describe, explain, and predict the effects of visuals on cognition is the Dual Coding Theory (DCT). Liu (2004: 226) explained that the DCT, which concerns the nature of language and imagery, can perhaps provide a framework to unify these disparate theories.

In light of the background of the study, the research questions are formulated as follows.

1. Is there any influence using reading text with explicit instruction with comic strips in ESP reading comprehension?
2. Is using reading text with comic strips with explicit instruction giving any influence on ESP reading comprehension through the students with different proficiency?

2 METHODS

This study was quasi experimental with pretest and posttest design with PQRST strategy and natural translation method. The subjects were the third semester of Mechatronics Department and Electronics Department, Engineering Electronics Polytechnic Institute of Surabaya. They were chose because they had the same characteristics

In order to determine which group belongs to the PQRST instruction class and the natural translation instruction class between 3-Meka and 3-Elka, the coin lottery was employed.

Prior the experiment, both classes were ensured to be equal in all aspects by observing both classroom, interviewing the English teacher taught in both classes, and using school document of students' English scores in previous semester. Those were carried out as the efforts to reduce the threat towards internal validity, in this case is selection (Ary et al, 2006: 298).

The data of students f the two classes are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: The Qualitative Features between two classes.

No	Features	PQRST Group	N-T Group
1	Number of students	27	27
2	Mean scores for English subject	58.89	56.76
3	The schedule of English subject	Monday 1-2	Monday 7-8

From the qualitative features in those two classes, it could be concluded that they were not significantly in terms of students' number in the portion mean scores for English subject. In other words, both

classes were homogenous which play an important role prior to the experimental research. It should be ensured that the subjects of the study in both groups were equal for the purpose of avoiding bias result.

Then, the students reading comprehension scores of both groups will be compared to determine the effect of the treatment instruction on both groups according to their proficiency.

Before the treatments, both experimental groups would be given the pretest, this was aimed to know and to measure the ability of both groups before the treatments, the pretest was conducted on both experimental classes to know the condition of the classroom and to ensure that both classes were equal in term of language learning achievement. Then, the next was the experimentation in which the two instructions were experimented. They were, PQRST group to the first group (first class) and N-T group to the second group (second class). After being given the treatments, the posttest was conducted to the groups. Due to the posttest, the writer would prepare the instruments that was reading comprehension in the form of Comic Strips and text only design, to each student with allotted time to do the test. After finishing the test, the instruments must be collected to find the results.

In the process of teaching and learning, a teaching schedule alternation between the teacher and the researcher was applied in order to minimize the possible threats, particularly in this case is that the teacher plays role on student's motivation. By alternating the schedule of teaching between the teacher and the researcher, the teaching and learning atmosphere were conditioned like the usual classes so that the students would not be suspicious that they were under the research. The discussion on the detailed lesson plan, including teaching strategy, media/materials, and assessment were carried out to the process of the experiments. In order to ensure that the teacher could apply the lesson plan on PQRST strategy and Natural-Translation strategy in both experimental groups on each meeting, the detailed explanation on the lesson plan were given to the teacher before starting the class. The detailed teaching schedule alternation between the researcher and the English teacher are shown in the Table 2

Table 2: Teaching schedule for the researcher and the English Teacher.

Meeting	1st Experimental Group	2nd Experimental Group
1	The English teacher	The researcher
2	The researcher	The English teacher
3	The English teacher	The researcher
4	The researcher	The English teacher
5	The English teacher	The researcher
6	The researcher	The English teacher
7	The English teacher	The researcher
8	The researcher	The English teacher

This swap was based on the consideration that every changes happening in the post-test for experimental groups did not have any relationship with the teacher in the group. In any other words, this is one of the researcher's effort to control the possible extraneous threat which was in the form of experimenter's effect during the treatment process.

Before conducting the treatment, the English teacher and the researcher discussed all the planning of the teaching and learning activities during the treatment for both experimental groups. All of the lesson plans for 8 meetings for both classes had been set by the researcher. Before implementing the lesson plans, the proposed lesson plans were discussed with the expert in ESP that was aimed at having feedback for the betterment of the lesson plans. The revise lesson plans then were communicated in detailed to the English teacher, so there was no misunderstanding between the researcher and the teacher regarding the implementation of the activities for the two groups. Based on the result of the discussion between the teacher and the researcher, some revisions were made. Some materials to conduct the activities were prepared, prior to the discussion with the English teacher, power point slide show and video were used as the media.

After all the lesson plans and media had been ready for the experimentation process, the English teacher and the researcher set the schedule for the experimentation for the groups. Prior the experimental process, the pretest was conducted on the first meeting on both experimental classes to know the condition of the classroom and to ensure that both classes were equal in term of language learning achievement.

The final stage of the data collection was administering the post-test. After administering the post-test, the scoring test was carried out. The formula of the scoring was that each correct test item was counted as one point meanwhile the wrong one was counted as zero point. Then, the number of correct items was divided by total number of the items and multiplied by 100 as the maximum score. The score of each student, then, was tabulated in the computer for further analysis.

3 DISCUSSION

3.1 The Difference of ESP reading comprehension between PQRST strategy group and N-T strategy group

After the process of treatment, the posttest was given to the PQRST group and N-T group in the form of ESP reading comprehension test, which lasted for 75 minutes.

Then, the T-test with independent sample testing is used to find out the answer on the research problem whether any difference or no difference between two groups. Based on the result of posttest in PQRST group and N-T group, it was shown that the mean scores of the groups were 77.4074 and 67.6852 respective.

Roughly, it could be concluded that the main score of the PQRST group was higher than the N-T group.

3.2 The Difference in ESP reading comprehension with high level proficiency under the PQRST and high level proficiency under the N-T

Based on the result of posttest of high level proficiency students under the PQRST and high level proficiency students under the N-T, which is used T-test with independent sample testing to find out the answer of the research problem, the mean scores for high level proficiency under PQRST group is 81.2500 and high level proficiency under N-T group is 71.7857 respectively. It could be concluded that the main score of high level proficiency students under PQRST was significantly higher than the high level proficiency students under N-T

3.3 The Difference in ESP reading comprehension with low level proficiency under PQRST and FD under N-T

Based on the posttest analysis of the low level proficiency students under PQRST and low level proficiency students under N-T, which is used T-test with independent sample testing to find out the answer of the research problem, it was revealed that the mean score for low proficiency students under PQRST group was higher with 69.72 than low proficiency students under N-T group with 53.33.

3.4 The Interaction between the Vocabulary Instruction and Students proficiency level in ESP reading comprehension

In this current factorial study, the students' proficiency levels were included as one of the factor in investigation they were high proficiency level students group and low proficiency level students group, whether or not that explicit vocabulary instruction is effective toward ESP reading comprehension. Regarding the analysis, which used Anova one-way test on the statistical computation, the interaction between two independent variables (instructions and cognitive styles) is shown that in PQRST group that there were 18 high proficiency level students. The data also shown that the mean scores for the high proficiency level students who were taught using PQRST is 81.25 Then, there were 9 low level proficiency students, and with multi covariate analysis 29.54. The data showed that the mean score for the low level proficiency students who were taught using PQRST is 69.72 In addition, in N-T group there were 21 high level proficiency students. The data also showed that the mean score for the high level proficiency students who were taught using N-T is 71.78 Then there were 6 low level proficiency students whose mean score was 53.33, and with multi covariate analysis 29.54 Based on the descriptive of the data above, it can be concluded that the mean score for high level proficiency students generally is the highest. It means that there are interactions among those variables.

4 THE INTERACTION AMONG VARIABLES TOWARD STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION

To answer the research problem related to the interaction between teaching strategy and students' proficiency levels, the data was analyzed with ANOVA, it is also shown that the significance value of the interaction between strategies and cognitive styles is .000. This significance level is lesser than .05 (sig .000 < sig .05) which means that there is an interaction between teaching strategy and students proficiency level. Moreover, although the statistical analysis showed a significant F test result, there was not post hoc test as it was aimed at analyzing the effect of factors with more than two levels.

5 CONCLUSION

Based on the statistics data, there were set 2 groups of students, a group of students with high level proficiency and a group of students with low level proficiency. They were under two kinds different treatment with two different media of ESP reading comprehension. Reading comprehension with text only and reading comprehension with text and comic strips.

Overall, in this study both strategy which is applied are appropriate to use and may need some development for next research to make it more interesting. Both groups have significant development when the strategy applied, even for the students in high level proficiency.

This is different with the media of reading comprehension. The finding in this study revealed that all students with a comic strip effects, regardless on proficiency and text level, performed better than the one, even this group is get better. But, further and deeper analyze found that the low level students apparently did not need the pictures to support the simpler text, and the higher proficiency group likewise did not need the pictures to support either the simpler or the more difficult text versions. However, the lower proficiency group did significantly better with the more difficult text when it was supported with pictures because presenting the text with pictures encouraged them to read the text using two source of information instead just one. Likewise, on the students with high level proficiency, they do not need the pictures to support the text to give them comprehending about high level comprehension.

It can be summaries that instruction is the most important for the students to guide them into ESP reading comprehension. Especially in the field of Engineering Polytechnic. The appropriate instruction on the class is the most main point to be concerned when the teacher delivers the material to the students. Using PQRST as the instruction to deliver the English with combining material between text and comic strip will be better to be apply.

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